

edward johnson building
faculty of music
university of toronto



WORKS BY

ALEXANDER GOEHR

WALTER HALL

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1983

8 P.M.

PROGRAM

NONOMIYA, Op. 27, for piano (1969)

Kathleen Solose

Nonomiya is the title of a No play. The piece is not programmatic - but there are certain factors which seem to have influenced the composition of this piece and justify the use of the title.

The division into two parts is characteristic of No plays of this type. In the first the principal actor (Shit ) declaims a kind of aria. He reappears in the second part (centuries may have elapsed) as a ghost - threatening those who have been responsible for his death. Now his singing moves towards a climax and breaks into a dance.

Finally there is a formal exit.

This work is dedicated to John Ogdon 'with affection and gratitude'. Boston, Mass., U.S.A., 18.1.69.

PRELUDE AND FUGUE, Op. 39, for three clarinets (1978)

Katherine Carlton, Don Ross, Marc Becker

This is the first Toronto performance of the Prelude and Fugue for three clarinets. The Fugue was written for the opening of the new Music School in Cambridge in 1977. The Prelude was added later, and the first complete performance was given by Matrix at the Edinburgh International Festival in 1978. It lasts approximately six minutes.

- Schott

LYRIC PIECES, Op. 35,
for wind instruments and double bass (1974)
(Canadian premiere)

Carol Stebbings, flute; Peter Voisey, oboe
Marc Becker, clarinet; Donald Shore, bassoon
James Sommerville, horn; Craig Penrose, trumpet
Robert Houghton, trombone; Peter Jones, double bass

Robin Engelman, conductor

Lyric Pieces (cont.)

These six virtuoso compositions were written in 1974 for the London Sinfonietta and commissioned by the Gulbenkian Foundation. They are scored for flute, oboe (and cor anglais), clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet and trombone with double bass: the combination of Varèse's 'Octandre'.

The slightly ironic title however, expresses something about the musical structure of the pieces, which in some respects reflects 19th century practice. Each is based on a brief idea which is fairly conventionally extended into symmetric bar structures. Expression results from the tension between these 'tonal' forms and the serially-derived structures.

Each piece is a self-contained composition, and each features one or more instruments as soloist. The first and final pieces are the most extended. In the first, the flute predominates together with the double bass in harmonics. The second, most sustained piece, has the solo horn, whilst the third is a slightly sleezy scherzo, low in pitch. The fourth piece also is heavily syncopated with an oboe and clarinet and the fifth is a trumpet solo - later taken up by double bass. The finale is a set of variations in the form of a Rondo with cadenzas for flute and oboe and clarinet.

- Alexander Goehr - July, 1975

INTERMISSION

DAS GESETZ DER QUADRILLE, Op. 41

for voice and piano on texts by Franz Kafka (1979)
(Canadian premiere)

Jean MacPhail, mezzo soprano; Derek Bampton, piano

This song cycle was commissioned by the Norfolk and Norwich Triennial Festival, with funds provided by the Eastern Arts Association, for Thomas Hemsley and Bernard Roberts. The texts by Franz Kafka are taken from "Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Laude" (Wedding preparations in the country): a collection of posthumously published prose fragments. I have selected and set seven texts in the original German. But the first one, "The rules of the quadrille are clear",

which might act as a title for the whole cycle, is set twice. At the beginning only the first sentence is set (perhaps reminding the listener of the way Britten employed an analogous line in his Rimbaud cycle, *Les Illuminations*); later, before the final short song this sentence is repeated and the setting of the words is completed.

This composition is dedicated to Gita Brenman, the owner of the earliest extant manuscript by Franz Kafka. Her grandmother was a childhood sweetheart of the great writer and this establishes a sentimental, if tenuous, link.

- Alexander Goehr, 1979

CONCERTO FOR ELEVEN, Op. 32

for instrumental ensemble (1970) (Canadian premiere)

Carol Stebbings, flute
Katherine Carleton and Marc Becker, clarinets
Craig Penrose and Mary Jay, trumpets
Ian McIntosh, tuba; Mark Duggan, percussion
Susan Cottrell and Carol Fujino, violins
Jayne Maddison, viola; Peter Jones, double bass
John Hawkins - rehearsal conductor
Alexander Goehr - conductor

This concerto for eleven players was written in 1970. It is scored for a kind of popular orchestra as was used in the last century in Eastern Europe - in fact, the precise orchestration was observed on an old photograph of a Russian Jewish wedding band.

In a sense, the whole tradition of the mixed chamber ensemble derives from these popular orchestras which were common in Eastern Europe. This popular origin and its close connection with classical chamber music culminating in the *Serenade* and *Suite* of Schoenberg lies at the heart of the conception of my Concerto. A further aspect of this is a certain 'homage to Beethoven', implicit in the formal scheme of the piece, which has a certain similarity with Beethoven's *Sonata*, Op. 101 for piano.

A brief first movement, allegretto ma non troppo leads to an extended scherzo, beginning vaguely, but gradually establishing the fast tempo. This is followed by a kind of trio "un peu folkloristique", which is itself a set of variations on the first

Concerto for Eleven (cont.)

section of the first movement, and a brief shortened recapitulation (presto) of the main material of the scherzo. There is a central slow, recitative-like movement, adagio ma non troppo and a final allegro.

The composition is based on two related, but significantly different twelve tone rows, coupled in such a way as to form a continuous circuit of twenty notes. This gives rise to a harmonic network of relationships as well as tonal elements, which in the course of the composition are isolated into 'quotable gestures', playing a considerable part in binding together the different sections of the work.

THREE PIECES from ARDEN MUST DIE, Op. 21a for wind band, harp and percussion (1967)

Carol Stebbings and Jeanette Hirasawa, flute

David Gerry, piccolo

Peter Voisey and Genevieve Graham, oboe

Andrea Budgey, english horn

Katherine Carleton, Wilf Kauffman and Laurie Bell, clarinets

Don Ross, bass clarinet

Fraser Jackson and Larkin Hinder, bassoons

Wendy Rose, contra bassoon

Jamie Sommerville, Mary Lee, Jennifer Wilson,

and Anne Bonnycastle, french horns

Mary Jay, Craig Penrose and Valerie Cowie, trumpet

John Wilson, David Reid and Robert Houghton, trombone

Paul Sylvester, tuba

Bill Brennan, Chris Burrell, John Thompson

and David Wilson, percussion

Laura Stephenson, harp

Stephen Chenette, conductor

Alexander Goehr's first opera, Arden must die, was commissioned by the Hamburg Staatsoper, where it was given its premiere performance on 5th March, 1967. The libretto by Erich Fried is based on the murder in 1550 of Thomas Arden, landowner and sometime Mayor of Faversham in Kent, by his wife and her lover with the connivance of others. The play, Arden of Feversham (published in 1592) is known to have been performed by Shakespeare's company.

Three Pieces from Arden Must Die (cont.)

The operatic version is a free adaptation, written in the manner of a 'black comedy' concerned with questions of guilt and moral responsibility among Arden's family, servants and neighbours, who all desire his death for a variety of different reasons. These concert pieces consist of (a) the Prelude to the opera - a brief piece beginning in what the composer describes as a 'bogus simple-sweet style' and rising to a forceful climax before dying away in a harp solo; (b) a 'copulating scherzo' (again in the composer's description) which in the opera acts as an interlude following the scene in the first act when Arden's wife takes her lover to bed, believing that Arden is at the mercy of the assassins' ambush, and (c) a composite piece from the second act. This begins with the opera's musical climax - a mime scene during which the conspirators clear away Arden's body and the traces of the murder to a variant of the 'simple-sweet' Prelude with the opera's 'violence music' superimposed on it in complex rhythmic proportions. Mr. Goehr writes: 'I adjusted the end of the piece so that it goes into a coda, mirroring the opening of the Prelude - which is, in fact, the music of the now discarded Epilogue in its original instrumentation'. The Three Pieces are scored for a full orchestral complement of woodwind and brass with harp and percussion.

- Noel Goodwin

BIOGRAPHY

ALEXANDER GOEHR was born in Berlin, son of the conductor Walter Goehr, and has lived in England since early infancy. He studied under Richard Hall at the Royal Manchester College of Music, where, with Peter Maxwell Davies, Harrison Birtwistle and John Ogdon, he helped to found the Manchester New Music Group which played an active part in the 1950's in propogating the music of Schoenberg, Webern and younger Continental composers. Goehr added a year of study in Paris with Olivier Messiaen in 1955-56, on a French Government scholarship, and first made an impression as a composer with a cantata, The Deluge (1959). Since then his major works have included the choral cantata, Sutter's Gold (Leeds Festival 1961); a Violin Concerto (Cheltenham Festival 1962); the Romanza for Cello and Orchestra (Brighton Festival 1968), as well as chamber music and songs, and the 'musical theatre' parable, Naboth's Vineyard, produced at the City of London Festival last July.

Alexander Goehr was appointed Professor of Music at the University of Cambridge in 1976.

Next event: University Singers
Conductor: Diana Brault
Wednesday, November 16, 1983
Walter Hall, 8 pm